

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Native American Picture Books of Change: The Art of Historic Children's Editions. By Rebecca C. Benes.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0v57d0gh>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 29(4)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

2005-09-01

**DOI**

10.17953

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bigger animals are better and a short walk is better than a long walk. Likewise, Kennett states that the “pace of cultural change also increased dramatically between 1,300 and 650 years ago, just prior to their solidification” (154). Where, in a “solidified” human society, is the cacophony of divided interests, values, cultural meanings, and individual agency? Human actors remain largely invisible, and in the end we are still left with abstract systems responding to environmental stimuli. Individual actors, culture in general, and Chumash ethnography in particular are ominously absent from the analysis.

My critique notwithstanding, I highly recommend this book. Kennett’s analysis is well organized and is exceptionally clear in its presentation of a theoretical model and the implications of that model and the comparison of those test implications against the archaeological record. The book is enjoyable to read and thought provoking and contains beautiful maps and other graphic elements. Kennett contributes an exceptionally thorough synthesis and substantive analytical contribution regarding one of North America’s premier archaeological regions.

*Mark Tveskov*

Southern Oregon University

**Native American Picture Books of Change: The Art of Historic Children’s Editions.** By Rebecca C. Benes. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2004. 168 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Rebecca C. Benes’s beautifully illustrated text offers the reader a glimpse into how federal Indian policy during the New Deal era altered the depiction of Native peoples in books published primarily for Native children and how this change was appropriated by mainstream children’s publishers. In so doing, *Native American Picture Books of Change* contributes a vital link in the history of the written word and visual descriptions of Native Americans for children.

Gloria Emerson’s sober forward provides the reader with an excellent historical context. She discusses the Brookings Institute’s Meriam Report of 1928, which put into motion the assimilation of Indian children via the print media. Emerson does not ignore the urgent demand for changes in how the Bureau of Indian Affairs conducted its “management” of the Indian assimilation. She is careful to explain how the Meriam Report cited the gross hopelessness among Native people in the face of their dehumanizing treatment by the United States federal government. This document advocated the encouragement, protection, and preservation of not only the Native peoples but also their cultures and arts.

According to Emerson, the Meriam Report opened the doors that facilitated reorganization of the bureau and its move from the jurisdiction of the War Department to the Department of the Interior, where it has remained to this day. The shift in the federal mind-set that caused this administrative relocation ushered in a method of multicultural education that is still in use today—the attempt to actively engage students by weaving their cultures into

the curriculum. This new approach, adopted under the leadership of John Collier, called for the mass production of teaching materials that incorporated the Native way of storytelling. The bureau hired individuals to painstakingly research the cultural histories related to various textbook topics and solicited artists from Native communities. Although these artists had studied outside of the Native community, their art maintained the essence of Native visual communication and cultural cues. They developed a new style that is identified as indigenous to Turtle Island.

Benes has carefully explored the story behind these artists and authors, who collectively produced more than 250 books. A trained and experienced librarian and children's literature specialist, she has left not one stone unturned—her diligence in tracking down the original manuscripts, artwork, and relevant personal papers is exemplary. If this were not enough, she also consulted notable and informed members of the Native communities regarding the cultural information portrayed in the text and depicted in the illustrations.

The depiction of Native Americans in children's literature reflects the historical range of Indian policy, which has variously treated Indians as sovereign nations, occupied nations, objects of forced assimilation, and possessors of a culture to be appropriated. The literature, in turn, mirrors a spectrum of viewpoints from "Indians are our friends" to "Indians are savages" to "Anyone can be an Indian." Books for children in the United States have long been used to acculturate, indoctrinate, assimilate, appropriate, and discriminate. Benes's text is a well-written account of the evolution of federal Indian policies and how those policies affected aspects of Indian education, especially textbooks and storybooks. These books had a tremendous influence on not only Indian Boarding School curriculums but also mainstream books about Indians for children.

Benes also sheds light on a more progressive collection of assimilationist textbooks, one that attempted to blend Native ways with those of the dominant culture. She goes to great lengths to explain how each non-Native author of such texts first gathered stories from Native storytellers and then wove storylines that were colored by Native sensibilities. Benes offers a sympathetic treatment of this development yet fails to address how the Native nuances of these stories nonetheless were omitted or repackaged.

*Native American Picture Books of Change* offers the student of Native images in children's books a uniquely broad and deep examination of its subject. Benes has managed to showcase an overlooked portion of children's literature, namely books about American Indians illustrated by American Indians. This work is highly recommended for use in classes on Native American art history and children's literature studies.

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